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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KYIV 001033

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MCAP](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: SEA BREEZE LEGISLATION FAILS AGAIN

REF: KYIV 953

Classified By: Charge James Pettit for reasons 1.4(b,d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) The Rada made two failed attempts on June 12 to consider legislation authorizing foreign military exercises in Ukraine, affecting Sea Breeze and ten other foreign exercises. The votes fell short as the divided OU-PSD faction which favors Ukraine's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions failed to deliver needed support. The bloc of Rada Speaker Lytvyn played hot and cold with the measure. Lytvyn had explained to Charge that deputies in his bloc fear a backlash by voters in Eastern Ukraine who oppose exercises by U.S. and NATO member forces. Prime Minister Tymoshenko's bloc offered solid support. End Summary.

VOTE TO CONSIDER JOINT EXERCISES AUTHORIZATION FAILS TWICE

2. (SBU) An attempt on June 12 to consider legislation authorizing foreign military personnel to participate in joint training exercises on Ukrainian territory twice failed to garner the 226 votes needed for the bill to come to the floor of the Rada. In the Rada's morning session a vote to add the legislation to the daily agenda failed with only 219 votes. Prime Minister Tymoshenko's bloc (BYuT) and the pro-coalition subset of the fractured Our Ukraine-People's Self Defense bloc (OU-PSD) voted in favor, with 152 and 57 votes respectively, but Rada Speaker Lytvyn's bloc only contributed 10 (out of 20) votes for the measure. After a coalition conference meeting during the Rada's mid-day break, Lytvyn called for a vote to consider returning to the legislation so that it could be included on the agenda. The vote to return to the bill failed, but this time with 150 BYuT, 20 Lytvyn bloc, and only 47 OU-PSD MPs supporting it. The next opportunity to consider the legislation will be June 23 when the Rada reconvenes.

LYTVYN EXPLAINS BILL'S SENSITIVITIES

3. (C) In a meeting with the Charge on June 11, Lytvyn explained his difficulty in voting for the legislation. Although the law is necessary for Ukraine to conduct eleven training exercises planned for 2009 with various countries, it is most closely associated with the annual Sea Breeze US-Ukraine joint exercise conducted with other NATO members and partners in the spirit of the Partnership for Peace. Lytvyn said that passage of the bill would have been simple had a broad coalition between BYuT and Regions formed in the Rada. However, following the collapse of the attempt at a broad coalition, all groups were being careful with the presidential election approaching. Lytvyn made clear his reluctance to vote for legislation was because it was perceived as pro-NATO and would leave him "exposed" to a backlash from voters in Eastern Ukraine.

¶4. (SBU) Former defense minister and Chairman of the Rada Committee for National Security and Defense Anatoliy Hrytsenko told the press on June 3 that failure to pass the legislation would negatively impact both Ukraine's international image and the combat capacity of the armed forces. Earlier in the year both Hrytsenko and then Defense Minister Yekhanurov stated that the 2009 defense budget was significantly below levels needed to meet GOU reform goals and regular military training requirements.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) The divided and disorganized OU-PSD group, whose members in principle favor Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration, failed to support the measure in sufficient numbers. This was due to two factors: some allowed hostility to the current coalition to outweigh their support for the measure; others just simply failed to show up for the final vote, apparently out of carelessness. For his part, Lytvyn played hot and cold with the measure, but, in response to Charge's urging, ultimately voted in favor of bringing it up for debate despite sensitivities within his bloc. With a tight defense budget, the armed forces stand to lose valuable training opportunities if exercises like Sea Breeze are canceled. The message that Ukraine's political forces cannot get their act together to approve legislation that would enhance interoperability with NATO allies and improve their integration chances was also clear.

KYIV 00001033 002 OF 002

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